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SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/RAMCHAND/PASCUAL

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TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PBTS](#) [IS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: WEST BANK SETTLEMENTS CONTINUE CONSTRUCTION

REF: A. JERUSALEM 2090
[1](#)B. 05 TEL AVIV 511
[1](#)C. 07 JERUSALEM 535

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Poloffs visited the West Bank settlements at Maale Adumim and Alfei Menashe on November 24 and noted ongoing, large-scale construction projects, which the mayors said were approved in 1999 and 2000. The mayors of both settlements urged the USG to condone construction in the area between the Green Line and the separation barrier to relieve pressure on settlers, and predicted that Binyamin Netanyahu's election as Israeli PM would lead to settlement expansion, including at E-1. End summary.

ONGOING CONSTRUCTION OBSERVED IN
MAALE ADUMIM AND ALFEI MENASHE

[1](#)2. (C) On November 24, Maale Adumim mayor Benny Kashriel told PolOffs that the settlement has grown to approximately 37,000 residents, and "needs 500 new unit approvals per year" for natural growth. He complained that the current construction rate is inadequate. He said Maale Adumim is growing because home prices are 20 percent cheaper than in Jerusalem and taxes are forty percent less. PolOffs observed large-scale construction in the "07" neighborhood in Maale Adumim's southeastern section. Kashriel said this construction was approved under former PM Barak in 1999-2000. He said he is "in discussions" with the IDF about opening a road from Maale Adumim to Jerusalem through the Palestinian town of 'Azariya and creating a new opening in the security barrier with a checkpoint to reduce travel time for settlers.

[1](#)3. (C) Alfei Menashe mayor Hesdai Eliezer told Poloffs the GOI is refurbishing a road leading to its new Givat Tal section in the southeast, where PolOffs observed construction underway on three new apartment buildings. Alfei Menashe General Secretary Yitzik Peleg told PolOffs the buildings will be opened in January, May, and August, respectively, and that construction has also begun on two additional buildings. Eliezer told Poloffs the Givat Tal construction was approved before 2000 and, ultimately, 1,200 houses are planned for the area. Peleg said "the government is involved in every step" of construction. (Note: Eliezer delayed the start of his meeting with Poloffs to review infrastructure costs at Givat Tal with Ministry of Construction and Housing officials. End Note).

"AMERICA IS RADICALIZING THE SETTLERS"

[1](#)4. (C) Both Kashriel and Eliezer said Israel's Roadmap-obligated "settlement freeze" is causing deep frustration among settlers. According to Kashriel, "America is radicalizing the settlers; by not permitting construction anywhere, you're encouraging it everywhere." Kashriel said

Maale Adumim settlers want better services, schools, and health care for their children and the lack of building permits is pushing them to oppose the USG and GOI. Kashriel said Maale Adumim settlers attended the emergency meeting at Kiryat Arba on November 18, protesting the HCJ decision to evacuate the settlers occupying the Rajabi compound (Ref A). Kashriel and Eliezer both argued that most West Bank settlers would feel less frustrated if the USG would allow construction in large settlement blocks, which, they believe, would be part of Israel in any permanent status agreement with the Palestinians.

"IF BIBI IS ELECTED, WE WILL BUILD E1"

15. (C) Both mayors expressed confidence that Netanyahu will win Israel's Knesset elections and will support construction in their respective settlements. Kashriel, a Likud member, predicted that Netanyahu's election would lead to the development of E-1. He said he will temporarily move his office to E-1 after the elections to advance his agenda, as he did during President Bush's January visit to Jerusalem. Eliezer, a Kadima member, told PolOffs that Tzipi Livni and Ronnie Bar-On are courting him to join the Kadima list. On prospects for peace, Eliezer opined that "Abu Mazen is a dead horse; you won't get peace through him."

WALLES